

HHS Brand Guide

*Being a Champion for Health and
Human Services in Texas*



SECOND EDITION

This brand guide is part of an ongoing, consolidated effort
to achieve cohesive messaging across all of
Texas Health and Human Services.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



Texas Health and Human Services is a champion of health and human services for residents, caregivers, community partners and the general public. HHS services are responsive and comprehensive.

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Note: The HHS Brand Guide contains references to links which are only accessible by HHS staff. For more information, contact HHS.Communications@hpsc.state.tx.us.

When you have multiple communications materials that share a common idea or call to action, the project should be considered a campaign.

HHSC and DSHS Communications staff are here to offer technical assistance and ensure your message is clear and effective across all platforms.

Contact information is located at the end of this guide.



Texas Health and Human Services

Mission

Improving the health, safety and well-being of Texans with good stewardship of public resources.

Vision

Making a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Brand Introduction

The HHS Brand

This brand guide covers the creation and management of the Texas Health and Human Services brand and the expression of identities for all agencies, programs and services. The goal of this guide is to provide consistent messaging and a cohesive look and feel across HHS.

Per Senate Bill 200, 84th Texas Legislature, 2015, HHS should look and feel like one system with unified parts.

HHS Brand Architecture — Monolithic

A brand is a person's collected experiences of an organization with a certain name. Everything someone remembers from communications, advertising, personal interactions and what other people say is the brand for that organization.

In a monolithic brand structure, a single overarching brand is used. Agencies, programs and services may be defined by their specific lines of business but still carry top-level branding.

By illustrating brand hierarchy, monolithic architecture helps employees and Texans understand how the different levels within HHS relate to each other.

Monolithic brand structures connect all the programs offered by an organization. For HHS, monolithic branding helps new programs introduce themselves through association with

the familiar HHS brand. If people are aware of one HHS program with good customer service and positive results, they will be open to trying new programs from HHS. This is called the “halo effect.” However, monolithic brands must maintain consistent quality since the impression left by any one service — whether negative or positive — can affect the entire brand.

In most communications with the public, use Texas Health and Human Services, or HHS, to present a cohesive and consistent image to clients, caregivers, community partners and the general public.

HHS includes both the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and Texas Department of State Health Services (Government Code § 531.0055).

The word “system” is not necessary but can be included in lowercase letters.

Logo Use in the HHS Brand

In a monolithic brand structure, the main mark carries most of the identity.

The HHS logo or HHS-DSHS version of the logo should be the main mark on HHS communications. HHSC program names may be included as text in an HHS logo lockup; however, programs cannot

include their own visual mark or icon. A logo lockup is not required. All logo lockups must be created by HHS Communications.

DSHS programs should use only the HHS-DSHS version of the logo. (See “The HHS Logo,” Page 14 and “Logo Hierarchy,” Page 16.)

HHS Brand Archetype – The Champion

Archetypes are symbolic representations of a brand that provide a familiar, emotional and defined persona. Archetypes are useful in branding because they provide a tangible personality for communications staff and vendors as well as those who interact with the brand. The brand archetype also guides all communications by defining the tone and voice for the brand.

The archetype for HHS is known as “The Champion.”

The Champion — an offshoot of the common Hero archetype — aims to make the world a better place and strives to achieve that goal. As a Champion, HHS works to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of Texans.

HHS also encourages people to become champions of their own health. HHS provides access to services and supports to help Texans achieve optimal health and well-being.

HHS as the Champion

The Champion empowers people to establish priorities and make their own choices to accomplish their goals.

The Champion

- Helps people act faster, stronger or better.
- Is tough, resilient and effective.
- Is self-motivated and motivates others.
- Has a clear mission.
- Helps people do their best.
- Does a hard job efficiently and well.
- Addresses a major problem and asks people to step up to address it.
- Believes in teamwork and the strength of working as a team.
- Assumes dignity and respect of those served.

Key Words

- Team
- Hard work
- Focus
- Energy
- Bravery
- Challenge
- Triumph
- Ambitious
- Determination
- Courage

Monolithic Brand Structure



DON'T

Do not use program logos. In a monolithic brand structure, it is not appropriate for subsidiaries to create and include their own sub-brand mark with the main brand mark. In this example, the HHS logo is hard to see and the relationship with the other logos is unclear.

DO

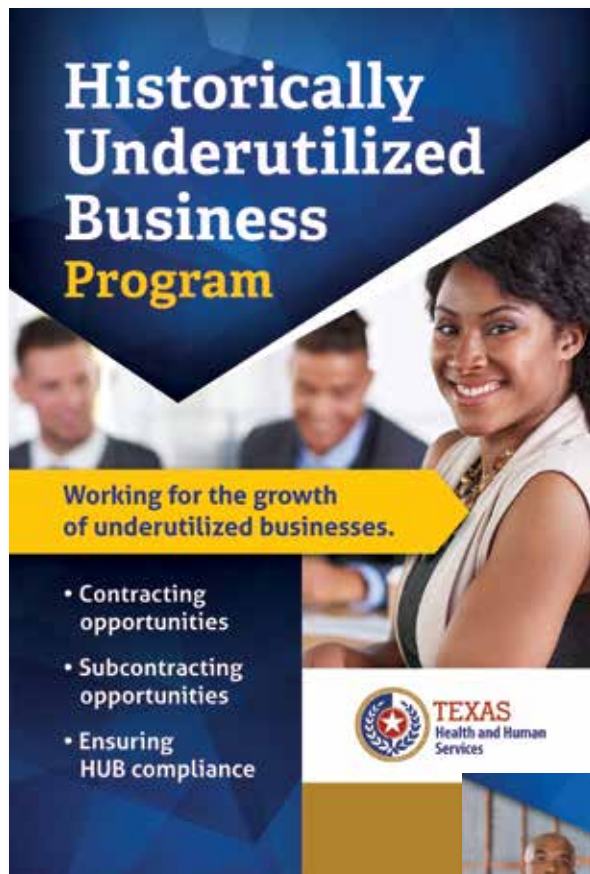
Use the HHS logo as the main mark on communications to maintain the structure. In this example, the lockup contains the HHS logo with both program names. This helps illustrate hierarchy but isn't always necessary.



Brand Foundation

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Monolithic Brand Structure

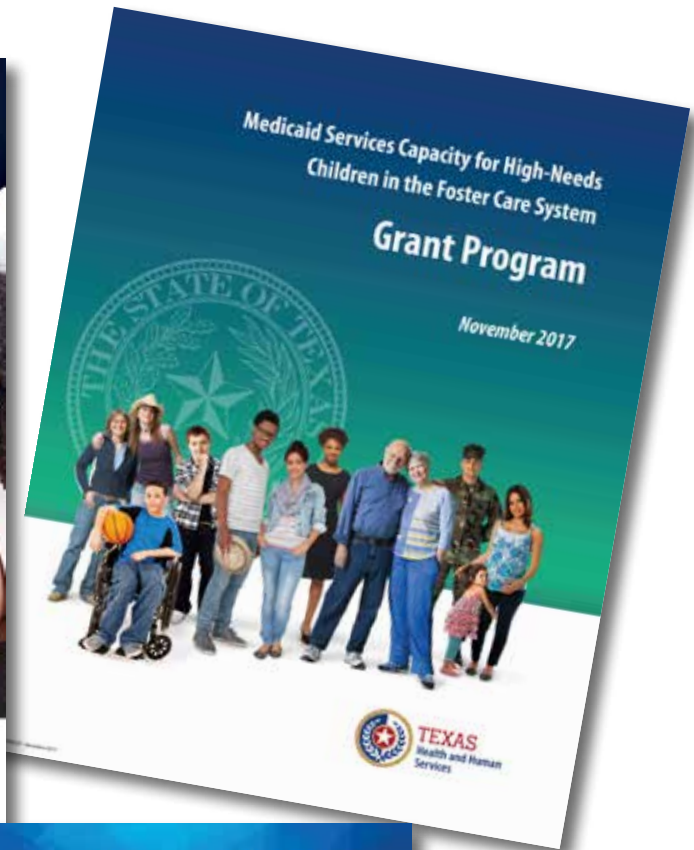


Historically Underutilized Business Program


Working for the growth of underutilized businesses.


- Contracting opportunities
- Subcontracting opportunities
- Ensuring HUB compliance

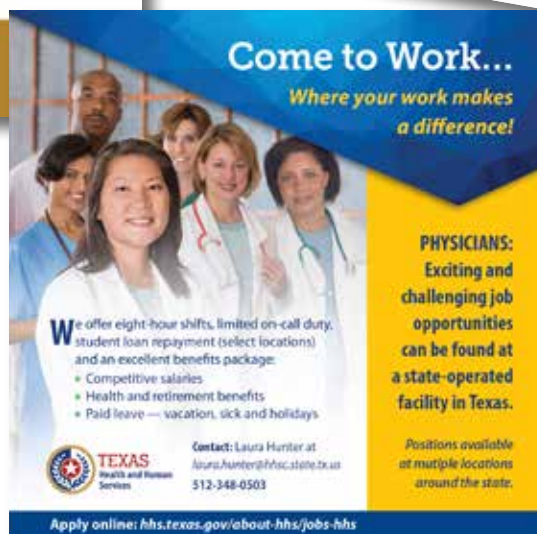
 **TEXAS**
Health and Human Services



Medicaid Services Capacity for High-Needs Children in the Foster Care System
Grant Program
November 2017



 **TEXAS**
Health and Human Services




Come to Work...
Where your work makes a difference!

PHYSICIANS:
Exciting and challenging job opportunities can be found at a state-operated facility in Texas.

Positions available at multiple locations around the state.

We offer eight-hour shifts, limited on-call duty, student loan repayment (select locations) and an excellent benefits package:

- Competitive salaries
- Health and retirement benefits
- Paid leave — vacation, sick and holidays

 **TEXAS**
Health and Human Services

Contact: Laura Hunter at
laura.hunter@hhsc.state.tx.us
512-348-0503

Apply online: hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/jobs-hhs

The HHS Style — Writing for the Champion

Materials should be clear, concise and specific, using plain language.

Communications should educate and empower, rather than convince through emotional appeals. Use short sentences and one- or two- syllable words. Break large paragraphs of text into smaller ones. Write only what you need the reader to know.

In copy, when HHS, HHSC or DSHS is followed by a program area, do not use an apostrophe to indicate possession or insert a comma or dash.

Example: Texas Health and Human Services
Medical and Social Services

Not: Texas Health and Human Services,
Medical and Social Services

Not: Texas Health and Human Services'
Medical and Social Services

If the program name appears first, use a comma to set off the agency name. If more text follows, include a second comma after the agency name.

Example: Staff in Medical and Social Services,
Texas Health and Human Services,
help Texans access services.

Appropriate Tone

- Use person-first, respectful language.
- Write in second person whenever possible, using imperative/command phrase and specific calls to action.
- Be clear, and use consistent style and format.
- Write in the active voice, using present tense.
- Use a positive tone whenever possible. Tell the reader what they can do or need to do, instead of what they cannot or should not do.

Inappropriate Tone

- Avoid language that depicts people as "downtrodden" or "needy."
- Avoid humor, including making jokes or puns.
- Avoid "cute" language that could take away from the serious nature of the need or services being depicted.
- Avoid using figures of speech; be specific.
- Avoid acronyms, jargon, long sentences or complex language.
- Avoid shaming language.

Communications

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Examples of Tone

DO Use key words, and focus on overcoming challenges through determination and hard work.

At HHS, we work hard to improve health and quality of life for people — individuals and families — in Texas. The challenges are great, but with focus and teamwork, we strive to provide Texans with the services they need.

DO Use positive, strength-based language to show readers they have options while still promoting the targeted behavior.

Breastfeeding, when possible, is the healthiest choice for the child. Mothers who struggle with breastfeeding should discuss options with their health care provider.

DO Tell who the person is and describe admirable qualities, not what diagnosis or behavior a person has.

Scott, a 20-year old with a passion for tools, works at an auto shop and is responsible for cleaning equipment.

DON'T Don't use a passive tone that lacks energy or confidence. Don't depict clients as downtrodden.

We at HHS care about people who are suffering. Needy Texans can be connected to services that might help them.

DON'T Don't inadvertently shame people who do not or cannot carry out a promoted behavior.

Good mothers always breastfeed to make their child healthy.

DON'T Don't allow biases to shape language by generalizing or stereotyping.

People with intellectual disabilities, like Scott, are hard workers who don't mind repetitive tasks such as cleaning.

Check the Appendices

The appendices at the end of this document provide additional guidance on writing:

- AP Style Guide and Gregg Reference Manual Quick Tips and Clarifications
- HHS Plain Language Terms and Phrases
- HHS Preferred Medical, Social and Program Terms

Translated Materials

Under federal and state laws, HHS must provide meaningful access to programs, services and activities to people with limited English proficiency. All client and public materials, including webpages, should be written in plain language (see Appendix D) and translated into Spanish (or another language as appropriate).

DO

- Create client or public-facing materials in both English and Spanish.
- Use two-sided “flip” materials that have English on one side and Spanish on the other when possible.
 - ◆ Ensures updates to one language are made to both.
 - ◆ Eliminates the possibility of running out of materials in one language.
- Maintain the same layout and photos for English and Spanish even if materials are separate.
- Request translation of comments you add to a form or form letter for a Spanish-speaking reader.
- Add Spanish subtitles to videos or recreate the video in Spanish when possible.
- Ensure websites for clients (especially those linked in printed materials) also have a Spanish counterpart. Spanish urls for the main HHS site begin with *hhs.texas.gov/es*.

DON'T

- Don't include Spanish side-by-side with English unless both languages can be given equal weight and treatment without confusing the reader.
 - ◆ Limit side-by-side translations to single page items such as posters or monitor slides which have a clear reading order.
- Don't translate only part of the text or include phrases such as “Se habla Español” or “Hablamos Español.”
- Don't translate logos. Use existing Spanish logos if program logo use has already been approved by your agency's communications office.
- Don't create separate materials for English and Spanish unless there is a programmatic reason or the length of the material does not lend itself to a two-sided “flip” structure.
- Don't translate event materials unless an interpreter will be available at the event.
- Don't use translations from online software or agency staff outside of HHS Translation Services.

HHS staff can learn more about HHS Translation Services at <https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/language-accessibility>.

Person-First Language

*Texas Government Code, Chapter 392
requires HHS to use person-first language.*

All publications, rules, reference materials and electronic media must use person-first preferred terms and phrases.

People with disabilities are, first and foremost, people.

Person-first respectful language emphasizes each person's value, individuality and capabilities. Materials should focus on the person rather than the disability to reduce stereotypes, negative assumptions and generalizations.

- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. For example, "A man who walks with crutches," not, "He is crippled."
- Tell what a person has, not what a person is. For example, "He has a learning disability," not, "He is learning disabled."
- Do not use the word "special," such as "special schools" or "special bus," as this implies segregation is acceptable. See exception in Appendix D Respectful, Person-First Language.

- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy or evoke pity, such as "survivor of," "afflicted with," "suffers from," "victim of," "prisoner of" and "unfortunate."
- Avoid euphemisms such as "physically challenged," "inconvenienced," "differently abled," "handicapable" or "disAbility."
- Even language unrelated to disabilities should be considerate to avoid negative connotations and stereotypes.
- When possible, avoid the word "individual" unless it is explicitly defined at the beginning of the text or used to distinguish people in groups from people individually. Instead, use "person" or "people." Population-specific terms are also acceptable, such as "children," "youth," "older adults," "men" or "women."
- Avoid or include definitions for the terms "claimants," "recipients," "beneficiaries," "members" and "consumers." In certain contexts, these terms may carry negative connotations either in English or Spanish. "Participants" or "applicants" are acceptable terms when the distinction is needed.

**See Appendix D for examples
of Respectful, Person-First Language.**



Designing for the Champion

Designs for printed communications should support and amplify the written content. The priority should be to communicate the message clearly, avoiding elaborate designs that overwhelm the message. Simple is best to communicate clearly to the public.

Artwork and photos selected should respect the dignity of all Texans. Avoid using unflattering shots or poses that imply dependency or oppression. Pay attention to all the photos in a publication and how a viewer may interpret the combination and juxtaposition of people depicted. See Pages 37– 40 for Photography and Illustration guidelines.

Appropriate Visuals

- Use bold, high-contrast designs and imagery.
- Use layouts with strong colors and definitive lines and shapes.
- Simple icons can be used to help organize materials.
- Depict the result of the help HHS provides, and avoid imagery that depicts a client as “downtrodden” or “needy.”
- Convey the Champion through photos or by using “headlines as heroes.”
- Use Champion imagery:
 - Obvious imagery includes overcoming obstacles, fast movement, accomplishing tasks and empowerment.
 - Subtle imagery includes showing the functional over the lavish and prioritizing motion and progress over stationary imagery.
- Illustrations are appropriate in some cases, such as for background art, abstract ideas or themes, and children’s materials.

Accessibility

Under federal and state laws, HHS must provide equal access to programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. All content should be accessible so the target audience can extract and understand the information presented in the manner easiest to them.

Accessibility must consider two components: visual accessibility (prioritizing readability and legibility) and digital accessibility (optimizing webpages and documents for screen readers).

DO

- Test font and image contrast for web and printed accessibility (especially for materials that may be printed on office printers).
- Use larger font sizes for older adults and people with visual impairments.

DON'T

- Don't justify or center align large amounts of text. Left-aligning text with a ragged right edge increases readability.
- Don't put large amounts of text in all caps or overuse italics or underlining.

DO

- Use images and icons to draw attention to or emphasize important information.
- Add captions to videos.


DON'T

- Don't crowd a page with text, such as with small margins or reduced leading.
- Don't use hyphens at the end of a line to break a word. If the word at the end of the line is already hyphenated, use a non-breaking hyphen or soft return to move the whole word to the next line.

When posting print materials online as PDFs, consider how a physical layout can be confusing when viewed electronically (for instance, viewing a folded trifold as two pages in a PDF). While an accessible PDF can let a screen reader know where to start reading the text, someone trying to view the file on a computer may have difficulty understanding the material. This applies for many common print layouts such as spreads with facing pages or print that flows vertically or at an angle.

To ensure the information can be accessed by anyone, consider:

- 1) Creating a word document with the information in reading order.
- 2) Making a PDF with each brochure panel on a separate page or with spreads changed into a single-page layout.
- 3) Publishing the information on a website.



**HHS Communications and
HHS Accessibility have developed
several Microsoft Office templates
for staff use, available online:**
*[https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/
communication-services/templates](https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/templates)*

**For more about accessibility, visit
accessibility.hhs.texas.gov
or email accessibility@hhsc.state.tx.us.**

Examples of HHS as the Champion

COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

There are many services available to assist older Texans and people with disabilities.

- Attendant care
- Home-delivered meals
- Emergency response services
- Day activity and health services
- In-home and family support
- Residential care

Region 4/5 • East Texas Area
1-877-317-2121
www.hhs.texas.gov




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Texas Health and Human Services
LOREM IPSUM

Our Mission

- Enhances employees' awareness of ethics laws, policies and principles.
- Is a resource for employees to see guidance and raise concerns.
- Elevates ethics as part of everyday conversation.
- Provides resources to foster fairness and impartiality in the work place.



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www.hhs.texas.gov • 512-535-1234

POWER

Prevent • Observe • Warning signs • Educate • Report

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation ANE Training Academy

Free two-day training event!
 This training will focus on screening for and preventing ANE, as well as challenging the status quo to reduce deinstitutionalization to ANE and change the environments that promote ANE.


Who should attend?
 Primarily front-line staff who provide direct care to nursing facility residents. Other nursing facility staff will also benefit.

How to register
 Registration begins March 2017.
 For more information, visit hhs.texas.gov/ane or email Karon.Lovaglio@hhs.texas.gov

ANE Training Academy is backed by Texas Health and Human Services, Quality Monitoring Program.

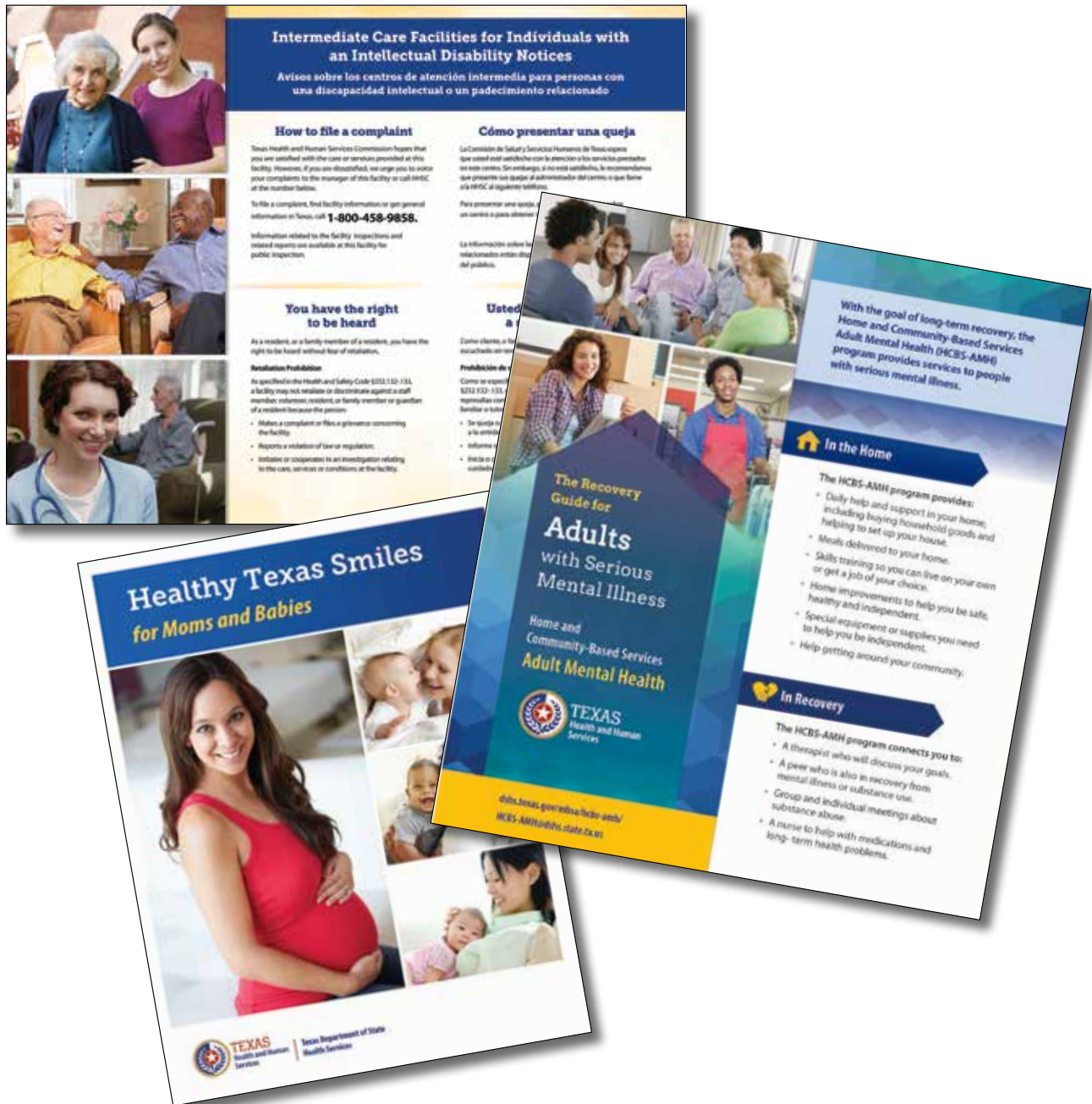
SAVE the DATE

May 17 - 18, 2017	San Antonio
May 24 - 25, 2017	Dallas
June 14 - 15, 2017	Corpus Christi
June 21 - 22, 2017	El Paso
June 28 - 29, 2017	Dallas
July 12 - 13, 2017	Houston
July 19 - 20, 2017	Abilene



Stay up-to-date! Be sure to follow the Texas Nursing Facility Quality Improvement Division on Facebook.

Examples of HHS as the Champion



Social Media Application of Brand

Social media can enhance and complement other HHS communication strategies, such as web, print and email efforts. For example, if a program would like to promote a newly created webpage, they may request to share messages and materials over HHS social media channels to help raise awareness of the site.

Social media communication should be consistent with branding and logo requirements. In some cases, it may be possible for programs to use current branding elements in social media materials.

Find an HHS social media page: hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/social-media

All programs that wish to use social media should contact their agency's communications office to discuss policies, branding and the process for sharing social media messages and materials over agency pages.

Examples



HHS staff can read social media policies and guidelines:

- HHSC social media guidelines:
<https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/sites/intranet/files/documents/policy/circulars/c-042-attachment.pdf>
- HHSC social media questions or requests (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo):
HHS.Communications@hhs.state.tx.us
- DSHS social media guidelines, including account posting and management procedures:
<http://online.dshs.internal/oc/socialmedia.aspx>
- DSHS video standards and guidelines:
<http://online.dshs.internal/socialmedia/video.aspx>
- DSHS social media questions or requests (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo):
DSHS.Communications@dshs.texas.gov

The HHS Logo

The HHS logo consists of a stylized wreath and star with the words “TEXAS Health and Human Services.”

The HHS logo or HHS-DSHS version of the logo must appear prominently on all publications. The HHS logo should be the only logo unless the HHSC or DSHS Office of Communications grants an exception for co-branding.

The HHS logo should be easily identifiable as the main mark on any publications. It should not be hard to see, taken apart, distorted or changed. Regardless of the variation used, the whole logo must appear (the icon plus the text).

Standard HHS Logo – Color

This is the primary version of the logo, to be used in most instances.



HHS Logo Variations – Color

Vertical flushed:



Banner:



Vertical centered:



HHS Logo Variations — Solid

Standard:



Banner:



Vertical centered:



Vertical flushed:



Reversed:



External Logo Requests

Programs are often asked to provide a logo for an outside entity to use online or on printed materials. Remember that placing the HHS logo on materials from outside entities can imply that the materials were produced by HHS or that HHS is affiliated with the services provided by the outside entity.

HHS staff — contact your agency's communications office for guidance and to obtain logo files. Contact information is on the last page of this guide.

Staff in the unit can convey proper usage of the logo to the outside entity and determine if providing the logo is appropriate.

Other HHS Images

The Office of Communications uses a small favicon for HHS websites and a profile image for HHS social media pages. Because HHS websites, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages will clearly have HHS branding and display the agency name as "Texas Health and Human Services," these two images are appropriate to use.

These images should only appear on a website or social media page that are clearly part of the HHS brand.



Logo Hierarchy

The logo hierarchy follows monolithic brand principles. While the basic version of the logo is always used, certain agencies or programs may need a logo lockup or co-branding.

Logo Lockups for HHSC programs

- Logo lockups consist of the HHS logo and HHSC program names.
- On HHSC materials, only include a logo lockup if a reader would be hindered in getting information or services without knowing the specific program name.
- In general, HHSC Communications provides lockups only for higher-level divisions or units.
- When creating lockups, HHSC Communications:
 - Uses Myriad Pro Bold Condensed for the agency name.
 - Uses Myriad Pro Semibold Italic for the program name, omitting terms such as "program," "office" or "services," when possible.
 - Prepares horizontal, vertical, flushed left and flushed right formats, using the standard and vertical centered versions of the logo.

Examples of HHS logo lockups:



HHS-DSHS logo

Use the HHS-DSHS version of the logo on all DSHS materials. DSHS programs do not use program lockups.



Co-Branding

The orientation of co-branded logos depends on where they appear and should place greater emphasis on the HHS logo. For example, use a co-brand with HHS on the left when the logos are left-aligned at the top of a document, and use a co-brand with HHS on the right when the logos are right-aligned at the bottom of a document.

- Used for events co-sponsored by HHS and another entity.

- Used with organizations that are partners or sponsors, either financially or in implementing the program.
- Used for national-level programs and initiatives with a consistently recognized logo.
- Used for programs primarily promoted through a third party (see Program Logos, Page 23).

Left-aligned designs:



Right-aligned designs:



Associated Logos

When a program is contractually obligated to credit another program or initiative, but the other entity is not directly involved in implementing the program or event, the co-brand format is incorrect. Instead, the other logo should be placed separately on an inside cover or in the body text with clear attribution and relationship to HHS (e.g., supported by, funded by, sponsored by). Use this format for event sponsors and committee members.

Use external logos sparingly to connect materials to national observance days, weeks or months that have a specific color and artwork.



Websites and Web Applications

The examples below show how the HHS logo is used to brand different sites. Your agency's communication office may grant exceptions to the logo usage below.

Logo Usage on the Web

DO

- Display the HHS logo prominently at the top left of a webpage.
- Have adequate free space around the logo.
- Obtain an appropriate logo by contacting your agency's communications office. (Contact information is on the last page of this guide.)
- Refer to "Logo Usage – Guidelines" on Page 20.

DON'T

- Don't crowd the logo or put it in a tight box.
- Don't add a glow, drop shadow or reflection.
- Don't use the logo as a watermark.
- Don't take apart the logo and use parts (seal or text) as artwork.
- Don't put the logo on a low-contrast or busy background that makes it hard to see.

Examples



◀ The HHS logo is prominently at the top left and also serves as the title of the site.

The logo is easy to see because of the generous clear space around it.

HHS staff who need to create a webpage, develop an application or update an existing website should contact their agency's Portal Authority Management Committee member.

View the list of members online:
<https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/portal-authority-steering-committee>

Logos

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Examples



◀ The HHS-DSHS logo appears prominently at the top left of the site and serves as the site title.



▶ Healthy Texas Women is a microsite granted an exception to maintain a program logo and unique color scheme. The HHS logo (top left) links back to the main HHS site. The Healthy Texas Women logo serves as the title of the site.



◀ The Texas College Survey is a microsite for a research initiative. The HHS logo (top left) links back to the main HHS site. The title of the site appears prominently in the center.



▶ Web applications or portals usually have minimal design and limited space. Here, the HHS logo and the site title are together at the top of the application window. The web banner is not a logo lockup. Use for websites and web applications only as an alternative to the microsite structure.

Logo Usage – Guidelines

The HHS logo should be easy to recognize as the main identifying mark on any HHS communications. It should not be hard to see or changed in any way.

- Use the HHS logo whole (icon and text), with no additions, deletions, substitutions or modifications.
- Except for resizing, do not alter the logo.
- Resize the logo proportionally by holding down the shift key. Do not compress or stretch the logo to fit.
- Do not try to recreate the logo art. Get logo files from your agency's communications office. (Contact information is on the last page of this guide.)
- Include the wording of the logo or logo lockup as alt-text in accessible materials.

DO

Use one of the several official versions of the logo in its entirety.



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TEXAS
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TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

DON'T

Don't add to, subtract from, resize or otherwise modify any part of the logo.



DO NOT CHANGE TEXT
Other words don't go here either.



Do not change the icon
or put other words here.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

DON'T

Don't stretch or condense the logo. (Logos can be resized proportionally by holding the shift key.)



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Logos

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- The color version of the logo must appear on a light background, preferably white, for optimum legibility without color distortion.
- Use the version of the logo that best contrasts with the background used.
- The logo should have generous margins of clear space around it. Do not crowd the logo with other elements.
- Do not box, encircle or otherwise crowd the logo. Do not place the logo too close to the edge of a page.

DO Use the logo version that is easily seen on the background.



DON'T Don't put the logo on a low contrast or busy background that makes it hard to see.



DON'T Don't use effects on the logo, like glows or drop shadows. Gimmicks make the logo less legible.



Logos

22

DO

Provide generous margins of clear space around the logo, so it is easy to see.

There is a nice margin between the logo and the edge of the page.
Words and other elements do not crowd the logo here.



DON'T

Don't box, encircle or otherwise crowd the logo. Do not place it close to the edge of a page.
Don't box, encircle or otherwise crowd the logo. Do not place it close to the edge of a page.



The Texas State Seal

In the HHS brand structure the top mark is the HHS logo. Using the Texas state seal like a logo to brand HHS as a state agency is not needed or appropriate.

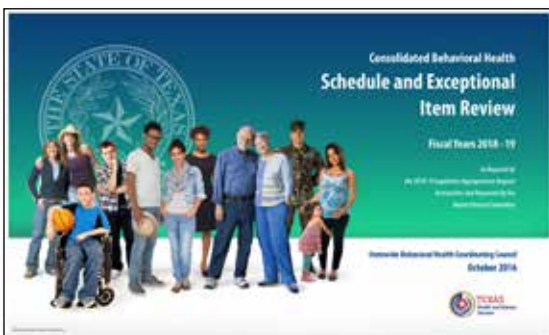
In some cases, using the state seal as an image or like a watermark may be acceptable. The state seal with its star, oak and olive branches is consistent with the Champion archetype.

The state seal is also appropriate to use for:

- Commemorative items that recognize a service or milestone for the whole state — not just HHS.
- Licenses and certificates that are issued by the state through HHS.
- ID cards for state employees.

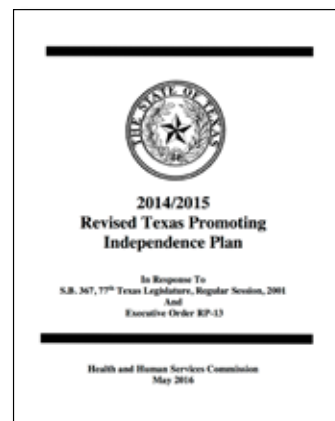
DO

Use the HHS logo as the main mark on HHS communications. Use the Texas state seal as art, like a watermark, not a logo.



DON'T

Don't use the Texas state seal like a logo on HHS publications and webpages.



Program Logos

In the HHS monolithic brand structure, the HHS logo should be the only logo used (see exceptions below). Program names may be included as text in a logo lockup (see Logos, Page 16). Programs should no longer use their own unique logo. In some cases it may be possible to use icons from old program logos as art in a design. This is one way to tie existing materials to new materials.

DO

Use the HHS logo as the main mark on HHS communications. Elements from old program logos may be used as art.



DON'T

Don't use program logos.



Exceptions to the Monolithic Use of the HHS Logo

Your agency's communications office can grant exceptions to monolithic logo use. If the office issues an exception, they will provide it in writing. Each program, logo or brand must request exceptions individually. Contact your agency's communications office for guidance. Contact information is on the last page of this guide.

- State, national or federal program logos with more brand equity than the HHS logo (SNAP, CHIP, 2-1-1, etc.).
- Logos for programs promoted primarily through a third-party (STAR, STAR+PLUS, STAR Kids, etc.). For example, people apply for STAR+PLUS

funds through HHS, but they would search for coverage through third-party providers who use STAR+PLUS to indicate available health plans.

- Logos for ombudsman programs (other than the HHS Office of the Ombudsman). Ombudsman programs must maintain independence as required by legislation. When appropriate, the HHS logo may be placed on the inside cover with a statement explaining the independence of the program within the system.
- When space is limited — e.g., ID cards, key chains, small print advertisements — you may use only the logo or program name most closely associated with the program.

Color Palette for the HHS Brand

The HHS Champion color palette draws on the strength of blue, red and yellow. They are the cornerstones of color, and the only hues that cannot be created by mixing other colors together.

Primary Brand Colors

Dependable Blue — Using blues as the dominant color, HHS presents itself as trustworthy, intelligent and an authority figure. Blue is the main color of HHS and has many shades to pull from to create visually interesting content.

Pure White — The proper use of white, or clear space, is important in design as it helps organize information and improves readability.

Secondary Brand Colors

These colors are used with the primary colors, but

in lesser amounts, as an accent or to highlight important information.

Optimistic Yellow — As the color of optimism and enlightenment, yellow is a good contrast to blue. Used sparingly, it quickly draws the customer's attention to important information or actionable items.

Powerful Red — An intense color, red is known as a color of caution and warning, as well as enthusiasm and energy. It should be used sparingly.

Tertiary Brand Colors

These colors are sometimes used with the primary colors when a design doesn't need to be as heavily branded. They include darker and brighter shades of yellow and red. A blend of blue and yellow is also available as shades of green.

Logo Colors



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



Pantone 287 C

CMYK: 100 . 87 . 21.12

RGB: 0 . 48 . 135

Hex#: 003087



Pantone 7621 C

CMYK: 20 . 100 . 95 . 12

RGB: 171 . 35 . 40

Hex#: ab2328



Pantone 7551 C

CMYK: 15 . 40 . 96 . 22

RGB: 180 . 126 . 0

Hex#: b47e00

Essential Color Palette

Primary



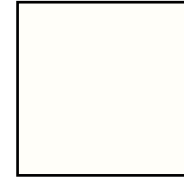
Pantone 300 C

CMYK: 100 . 62 . 7 . 0
RGB: 0 . 92 . 185
Hex#: 005cb9



Pantone 287 C

CMYK: 100 . 87 . 21 . 12
RGB: 0 . 48 . 135
Hex#: 003087



White

Secondary • Frequently used with the primary palette colors, but in lesser amounts.



Pantone 284 C

CMYK: 54 . 22 . 0 . 0
RGB: 109 . 171 . 228
Hex#: 6dabe4



Pantone 306 C

CMYK: 80 . 4 . 5 . 0
RGB: 0 . 179 . 227
Hex#: 00b3e3



Pantone 7548 C

CMYK: 0 . 24 . 100 . 0
RGB: 255 . 198 . 0
Hex#: ffc800



Pantone 7621 C

CMYK: 20 . 100 . 95 . 12
RGB: 171 . 35 . 40
Hex#: ab2328

Tertiary • Sometimes used with the primary palette colors, but in lesser amounts.



Pantone 7551 C

CMYK: 15 . 40 . 96 . 22
RGB: 180 . 126 . 0
Hex#: b47e00



Pantone 7421 C

CMYK: 38 . 94 . 63 . 45
RGB: 106 . 27 . 50
Hex#: 6a1b32



Pantone 7545 C

CMYK: 77 . 60 . 44 . 26
RGB: 67 . 83 . 99
Hex#: 435363



Pantone 3272 C

CMYK: 100 . 3 . 50 . 0
RGB: 0 . 161 . 155
Hex#: 00a19b



Pantone Bright Red C

CMYK: 0 . 90 . 95 . 0
RGB: 255 . 58 . 30
Hex#: ff3a1e



Pantone 360 C

CMYK: 61 . 0 . 96 . 0
RGB: 108 . 192 . 74
Hex#: 6cc04a

Colors outside the brand palette

Colors that aren't part of the brand palette (such as pink, purple and orange) may be used in a limited capacity to connect materials to national observances that have an associated color (e.g., purple for Alzheimer's awareness). Any exception must be approved in writing by the agency's communications office.

Web Application of Brand Colors










For brand consistency, all HHS websites should use the provided colors, unless granted a written exception from your agency's communications office.

- Do not use link colors, gray or dark gray for static text.
- Use red for alert messaging only.
- Use accent colors only as accent colors; they should not dominate the page.

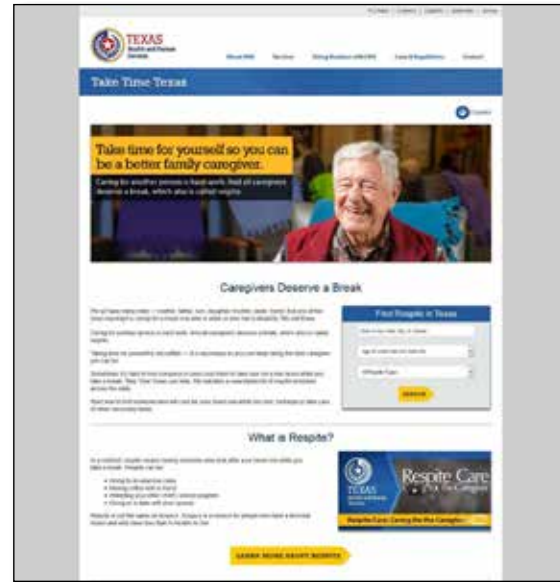
Primary Colors

	Dark Blue (Heading 1) RGB: 2 . 37 . 78 Hex: #02254e		Medium Blue (Dominant) RGB: 34 . 89 . 156 Hex: #22599c		Bright Blue (Links) RGB: 9 . 101 . 213 Hex: #0965d5		White
--	--	--	---	---	--	--	--------------

Secondary Colors

	Black (Body Font Color) RGB: 36 . 36 . 36 Hex: #242424		Yellow (Button/CTA) RGB: 255 . 200 . 0 Hex: #ffc800		Red (Alerts) RGB: 211 . 48 . 10 Hex: #d3300a		Soft Blue I (Accent) RGB: 104 . 149 . 203 Hex: #6895cb		Soft Blue II (Accent) RGB: 132 . 170 . 216 Hex: #84aad8
	Dark Gray (Accent) RGB: 91 . 91 . 92 Hex: #5b5b5c		Medium Gray (Accent) RGB: 204 . 204 . 204 Hex: #cccccc		Light Gray I (Accent) RGB: 234 . 234 . 234 Hex: #eaeaea		Light Gray II (Accent) RGB: 233 . 233 . 234 Hex: #e9e9ea		

- DO** Shades of blue should dominate the page. Grays visually recede content to the back of the page. Yellows, used sparingly, call out important information and actionable items.



- DON'T** Don't fall into the trap of "all content is important and needs to be colored differently to stand out." Don't use too many colors, and if a color is not in the palette, don't use it.



- Use of yellow on content that doesn't need to be called out.
- Use of red for content unrelated to alerts or support messages.

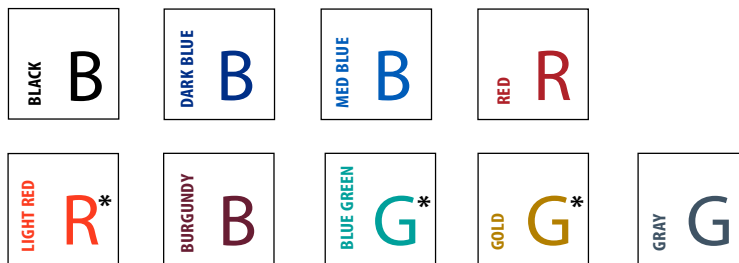
- Color combinations do not meet accessibility standards.
- Incorrect use of color palette.



Accessibility

Accessibility plays a vital role when choosing colors. All possible color combinations within the color palette have been tested for accessibility. The color combinations indicated here should be accessible on most computers and printed materials; however, color contrast will vary depending on the printer and color profiles.

Below are guidelines for the use of text on colors from the palette to ensure that they are easy to read.* Although these combinations are accessible, not all are suitable for the HHS brand.



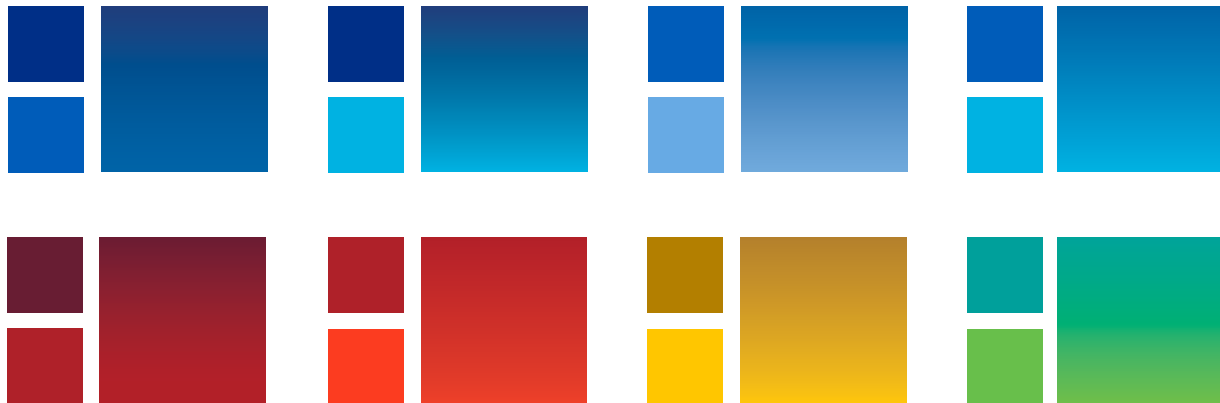
**Asterisk indicates a color combination that is considered accessible only with large text (minimum 14 pt. bold or 18 pt. regular). Normal text is not accessible.*



Refer to the colors in the brand palette found on Page 29.

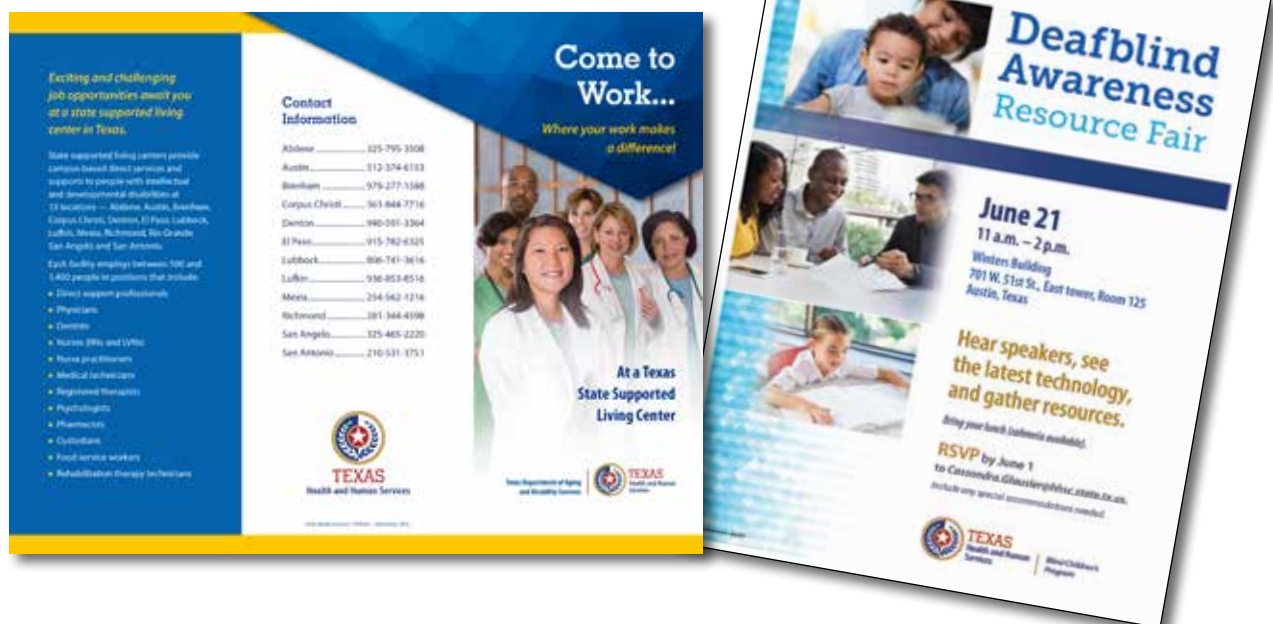
Do not attempt to recreate the color palette in Microsoft Office. HHS Accessibility and HHSC Communications have chosen colors for Microsoft Office to approximate the brand colors. To ensure appropriate application of the colors, only use the color palette provided in HHS templates. HHS staff can access templates at <https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/templates>.

Color Gradients



Color Usage – Examples

- DO** Use shades of blue and white as the dominant colors in a design.



Color Usage – Examples

DO Use secondary and tertiary colors from the palette in lesser amounts to highlight important information.



DON'T Don't make blue a secondary color, clutter the page with too many colors, or use colors outside the palette.



DON'T Don't overlay colors that are hard to read and would not pass accessibility testing.



Font Usage in the HHS Brand

The HHS brand relies on three collections of fonts: Formal, Informal and Universal. The fonts chosen for each collection are meant to embody the HHS Champion brand while meeting accessibility guidelines.

Titles and Headlines

Each collection has slab-serif font options to use for titles and headlines. Slab-serif fonts have weight and readability to grab a reader's attention. Don't use italics in titles and headlines, because they reduce readability and connote softness instead of strength.

Headings and Body Copy

Each collection has sans-serif font families for use in headings and body copy. In printed documents

with a lot of text, use the collection's serif font to improve readability. All of these chosen fonts convey the approachable nature of the HHS brand

Choose a collection based on the type of materials being produced and the target audience:

Formal: For high-profile reports, external communications and some client materials.

Informal: For most client materials and internal communications.

Universal: For documents created or viewed in Microsoft Office, email correspondence and memos.

Maximize readability

- Use simple fonts without ornate lettering.
- Websites should use slab-serif fonts only for large headings and a sans-serif font in all other places.
- Use generous margins and white space so your text is more inviting to read.
- The leading (space between lines of text) should not be too tight or too roomy. A line-height of 1.5 times the font size is usually ideal.
- For body text, the optimal line length is considered to be 50 – 75 characters per line, including spaces.
- Make sure heads, subheads and correlated body text are visually grouped together. For example, a subhead should be closer to the text it introduces than the text above it.
- 11-point Verdana is acceptable for body copy. Use large font sizes for older adults and people with visual impairments.
- 10-point Verdana is acceptable for tables.
- For electronic accessibility, assign fonts through stylesheets or, in Microsoft Office, themes.

The HHS templates already contain the recommended fonts, leading and heading styles. Don't use hard returns or spaces to create leading or indentations. HHS staff can access templates at <https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/templates>

Font Collections

Formal

Slab-serif fonts for titles, headlines and level-one headings (pick one)

Archer Bold

Arvo / Arvo Bold

Memphis Medium /

Memphis Bold/

Memphis Extra Bold

(one or two word headlines only)

Sans-serif fonts for level-one headings, subheads and body copy (pick one family)

Myriad Pro Family
(19 fonts)

Trade Gothic Family
(3 fonts)

Serif fonts for dense body copy in printed materials (pick one)

Garamond

Minion Pro

Informal

Slab-serif fonts for titles, headlines and level-one headings (pick one)

Adelle

Museo Slab

Roboto Slab Regular /
Roboto Slab Bold

Sans-serif for level-one headings, subheads and body copy (pick one family)

Aller family
(4 fonts)

Fira Sans family
(22 fonts)

PT Sans family
(6 fonts)

Rotis Sans Serif family
(6 fonts)

Serif fonts for dense body copy in printed materials (pick one)

Garamond

Minion Pro

Universal

Slab-serif fonts for titles, headlines and level-one headings

Rockwell Regular/
Rockwell Bold

Sans-serif fonts for level-one headings, subheads and body copy (pick one family)

Calibri family

Verdana family

Tahoma family

Serif fonts for dense body copy in printed materials (pick one)

Garamond

Palatino Linotype

In addition to the approved fonts listed here, designers can use other fonts to style words considered background art. This text must be considered non-essential and should be included in the alt-tag of the image in the accessible file.

Obtaining fonts

Most HHS staff should use Universal fonts, which work on all computers and usually come installed with Microsoft Office.

Designers and vendors who use Adobe's Creative Cloud can install Formal and Informal fonts through Adobe TypeKit or download them online.

When creating PDFs, make sure fonts are embedded so the file will display correctly, even if someone does not have the fonts used in their system. Universal fonts generally work without embedding because they are available on most computers.

Because of licensing restrictions, HHSC and DSHS Communications cannot provide font files.

Font sources

- **Adobe Typekit:** Adelle, Museo, Roboto Slab, Aller, Myriad Pro, Fira Sans, Open Sans, Minion Pro, Garamond (Fonts are available with subscription or for purchase.)
- **Free online:** Arvo, PT Sans (FontSquirrel is a reliable site.)
- **Paid licenses:** Archer Bold, Memphis, Trade Gothic, Rotis Sans (MyFonts is a reliable site.)

Users should be familiar with license restrictions when installing fonts.

Using Typography – Examples

DO Use a slab-serif font (like Arvo or Memphis) for big headlines, page headlines and section headlines. Use a sans-serif font family (like Myriad Pro) for all subheadlines and body copy.

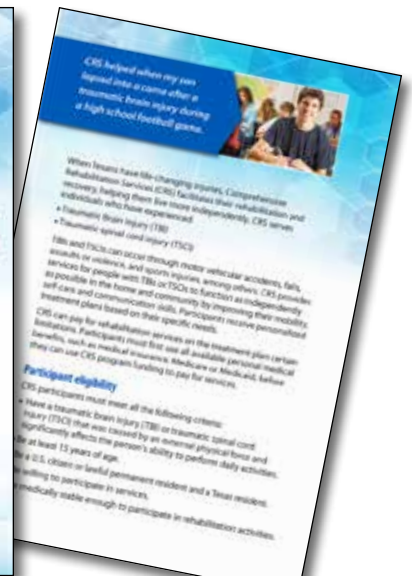
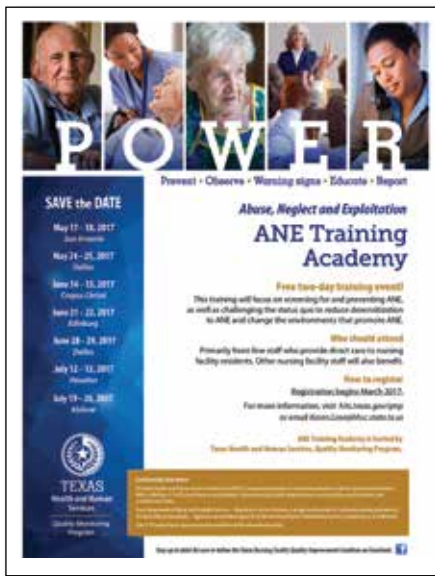
Consider using a condensed font for subheads. It helps create contrast, which makes the hierarchy of information easier for the reader to understand.



Typography

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- DO** Use a slab-serif font (like Arvo or Memphis) for big headlines, page headlines and section headlines.
Use a sans-serif font family (like Myriad Pro) for all subheadlines and body copy.



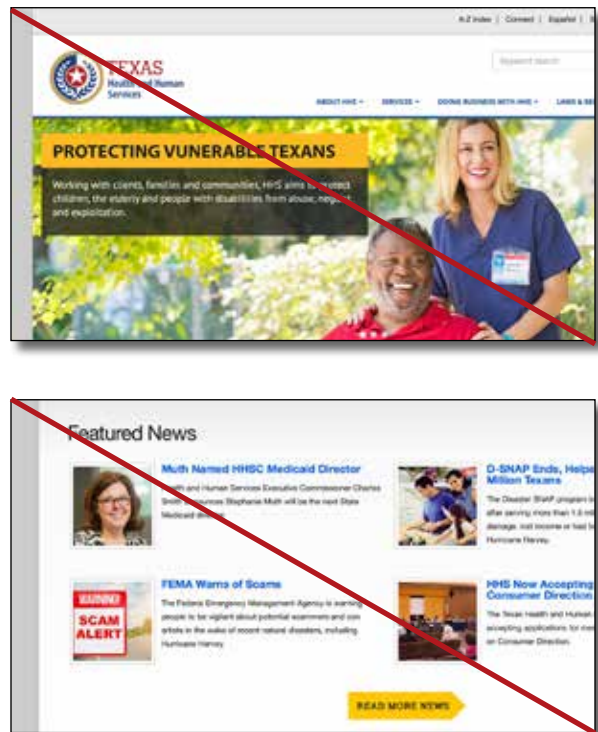
- DON'T** Don't use a slab serif font for body copy. Don't use all caps for anything other than small actionable areas or short headlines.



Web Application of Typography

DO For web use, choose a Formal slab-serif font for titles, headlines and level-one headings (with serif style as a fallback), and use any sans-serif brand font like Verdana for all other headings and body copy (with sans-serif style as a fallback). Use CSS to define a font stack with the preferred font followed by fallback fonts or styles. For example: font-family: "Myriad Pro", Verdana, sans-serif;

DON'T Don't use a sans-serif font for titles. Don't use a serif font for subheads and body copy. Don't forget to include the serif or sans-serif designation when defining fonts in CSS. For example: If body text is not defined as sans-serif, it might appear in Times New Roman or Times.



Photography Guidelines for the HHS Brand

Photography should communicate the HHS commitment to improving the care and wellbeing of Texans through the Champion archetype.

Original and stock photographs should follow the Champion brand of HHS, showing HHS staff championing for the people of Texas and how HHS services improve the lives of Texans.

HHS photography should create the feeling of authenticity (not look staged), confidence, professionalism, empowerment and engagement.

These guidelines apply to original photography shot by HHS Communications staff and stock photography purchased online.

Selecting Champion Photos

Ensure photographs used for HHS materials adhere to copyright laws. Images found online must have clear information about usage. If the image copyright is unclear, do not use the image.

- Models in photos should look natural, not staged.
- Lighting should appear natural to the scene. Avoid photos with harsh or high contrast lighting or photos taken at unusual angles or with altered perspective.
- When possible, choose models with a positive demeanor; models do not have to be smiling but should look confident.
- Don't use photos of people conveying emotions outside the Champion brand, such as overly ecstatic or sad.

- Avoid cropping off faces from the frame.
- Avoid extreme close-ups of people's faces or hands.
- Use high-resolution images without pixelation.
- Don't use stretched or skewed images.
- Find photos with the subject in focus; a blurred background is fine.
- Whenever possible, show diversity.

Taking Champion Photos

When taking photographs, get signed releases, particularly if the photo will be the centerpiece of HHS communication and campaign materials.

However, it is not necessary to get releases for people photographed at public events if the image will not be the centerpiece of HHS communication and campaign materials.

In all cases, photographers should not capture images of anyone who does not want to be photographed.

- Shoot photos in an appropriate, live environment where the subject appears natural and engaged.
- Have the Champion brand conveyed by the photo's main subject, preferably an HHS employee.
- Show HHS employees being champions for the people of Texas when appropriate. Sensitive topics should not show an employee being a champion.

- Follow the essential color palette of HHS branding guide.
- Take photos in a well-lit area with accurate white balance that does not alter the skin tone of the subject.
- Have a clear focal point.
- Shoot photos at eye level or slightly below the subject when possible to create the feeling of confidence.
- Incorporate diversity when choosing models.
- Shoot photos in RAW format.
- Shoot with plenty of space around the subject to give designers flexibility in cropping.
- Don't shoot logos or brands on clothing or clothing with repetitive patterns that can cause the moiré effect (lines, dots, etc.).

Champion Photographs – Examples

DO Use images that feature people looking natural and engaged, in confident stances that convey Champion. Full light is used without creating harsh shadows or soft edges and blue tones dominate.



DON'T Don't shoot at odd angles, use harsh shadows or show emotions not in line with the Champion brand.



Illustrations

While photographs are the best way to capture the Champion brand, illustrations, used sparingly, can help tailor materials for children or to show abstract concepts. Solid and bold details that communicate confidence will communicate the Champion brand.

Illustrations for children's materials

DO

Promote excitement using traditional illustrations that depict real-life possibilities while using brand colors and fonts. Maintain diversity.



DON'T

Don't use free clip art, "Manga" style drawings with a strong style or personality, mascot-style images that look like logos, or imaginative and fantasy illustrations.

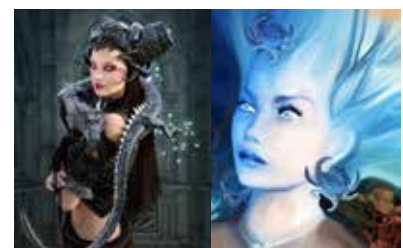
"Manga"



Mascot

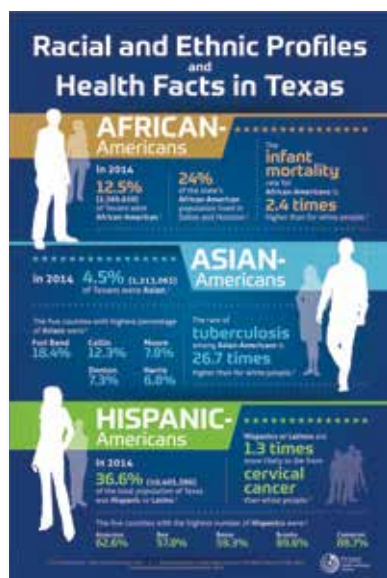


Fantasy



Illustrations for general public materials

DO Supplement anchor photos with illustrations, and supplement anchor illustrations with photos. Use only symbolic illustrations as anchor images. Use silhouettes of people to avoid indicating any one ethnicity.



DON'T Don't use low-quality clip art, three-dimensional illustrations, grunge, paintings, or detailed drawings.

3D



Detailed



Paintings



Design Elements for the HHS Brand

The design elements include patterns, textures, shapes and lines chosen to reinforce the Champion archetype.

Patterns incorporate solid, angular and bold details that signify the confidence and stability found in a Champion brand. Other elements include strong geometric shapes such as stars, frames and the shape of Texas.

Each element used should give personality to the design and should not have a personality of its own. The colors of each pattern and shape can be adjusted to a shade found within the HHS color palette to broaden their utility.

Due to licensing restrictions, HHS communications cannot provide vector files. Designers can find and use similar vector patterns and textures that convey the Champion brand.

Examples of patterns and textures

DO Use solid, angular, bold and geometric shapes, adjusted to fit the color palette. You can purchase these patterns and textures online from Thinkstock using the numbers below.



Thinkstock: 183954960



Thinkstock: 470797544



Thinkstock: 485168235



Thinkstock: 471009664



Thinkstock: 498882575



Thinkstock: 521257040



Thinkstock: 483658596



Thinkstock: 499536815

DON'T Don't use patterns with flourishes that are overly ornate or soft.



Examples of shapes

DO Use Champion shapes, like shields, stars and arrows. They should be simple, bold and be adjusted to fit the color palette. Use right-facing arrowheads to signify forward momentum (unless the desired action is “back to basics” or a similar sentiment)



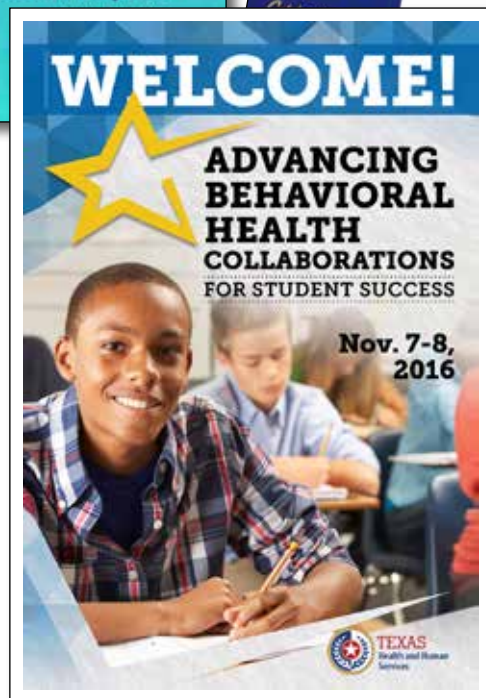
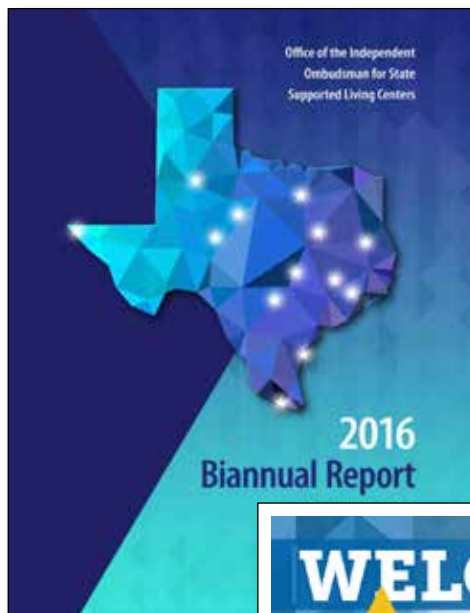
DON'T Do not use soft, swirly, grungy or overly complicated shapes.



Design Elements

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Design Elements – Examples



Appendix A

**Associated Press Style Guide and Gregg Reference
Manual Quick Tips and Clarification**

Appendix B

Plain Language Terms and Phrases

Appendix C

**HHS Preferred Medical, Social and
Program Terms**

Appendix D

Respectful, Person-First Language



Associated Press Style Guide and Gregg Reference Manual

Quick Tips and Clarification

Acronyms, Initialisms

- Avoid unnecessary or excessive acronym use.
- In general, acronyms or initialisms should be easily understood on second reference without including the acronym or initialism in parenthesis after first reference (AP).
- Exception to AP: For longer materials or materials that require several acronyms or initialisms, it is permissible to include the acronym or initialism in parenthesis on the first reference.

Addresses

- Abbreviate only Avenue (Ave.), Boulevard (Blvd.) and Street (St.) for numbered addresses (AP).
- For mailing addresses, include a ZIP code and use the postal abbreviation for the state (e.g., TX) (AP).
- Exception to AP: For numeric streets only, to avoid confusion, spell out “Street.”

Example: 701 W. 51st Street. Not: 701 W. 51st St.

Age

- Always use figures (AP).
- If the age is an adjective or a substitute for a noun, hyphenate it (AP).
- Clarification on AP: When expressing age ranges using “younger” or “older,” include the minimum or maximum age (not “older than 17” but “18 and older”)

Examples: A 21-year-old client. The client is 21 years old. The boy, 6, has a sister, 3. The program is for 18-year-olds. She is in her 50s. Only youth 20 and younger qualify.

Brackets

- Brackets are permissible instead of parentheses if the item that needs to be set off already uses parentheses (Gregg).

Example: By 2030, there will be 71 million older Americans, accounting for roughly 20 percent of the population (*The State of Aging and Health in America 2007*, Centers for Disease Control [CDC]).

Dates

- For dates and years, use figures (AP).
- Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates (AP).
- Spell out the month unless it appears with a date. If used with a date, abbreviate the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. (AP)

Examples: The webinar will take place in February. The meeting is May 23. The event happened Dec. 15.

Dashes, Hyphens

- Use hyphens (-) only for compound words.
- Use en dashes (–) for ranges (Gregg).
- Clarification on Gregg: Add spaces around en dashes if needed for legibility.
- Use em dashes (—) with spaces to separate ideas or phrases in a sentence (AP, Punctuation, Dash).

Example: A custom-built wheelchair — one made specifically for the user — can cost \$500–\$15,000.

Degrees

- Lowercase and use an apostrophe in general references (bachelor’s degree, a master’s, etc.), but an associate degree (no possessive).

- Capitalize official degree names: Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science.
- Abbreviations should follow full names and be offset by commas: John Snow, Ph.D., spoke.
- Do not use a title and a degree abbreviation together (either Dr. Jane Smith or Jane Smith, M.D.).
- In lists, such as biographies in a conference agenda, remove periods from all degree abbreviations.

Lists

- Use bullets instead of dashes in a list (Gregg) and preferably indent the list.
- Always use a colon after the element that introduces a list (AP, Gregg).
- Capitalize the first letter of each item. The list should have parallel structure, meaning each item uses the same pattern of words (all nouns or all verbs, etc.).
- Use periods when the items in the list are complete sentences or complete the introductory phrase. No periods are needed if the introductory element is a complete sentence or if the listed items are like an inventory sheet or shopping list.
- Exception to AP and Gregg: For handbooks only, items in a list that are part of the same sentence may start with a lowercase letter and end with a semicolon, with the second-to-last item ending with a semicolon and a conjunction.

Numbers

- In general, spell out one through nine (AP).
Example: She won first place four years in a row.
- Spell out numbers at the start of a sentence, except years.

- Use figures for 10 or above and whenever preceding a unit of measure or referring to ages of people, animals, events or things.

Example: According to a CDC study, more than one in 10 children ages 8 to 15 have been diagnosed with a mental illness.

- Use figures for addresses, dates, years, decimals, percentages, millions, billions, trillions and page numbers. For full list, see AP Style Guide.

Percent

- Use figures and spell out the word (AP).
Example: We had a 40 percent increase this quarter.
- Exception to AP: The percent symbol can be used in tables, charts and graphs when space is limited.
- Exception to AP: For visual communications when quick comprehension is necessary (posters, videos, presentation slides, etc.), the percent symbol may be used in text.

Publication Titles

- Place titles of published works in quotes (AP).
- Italicized titles are permissible when titles appear in dense text and quotation marks would reduce clarity (Gregg). This applies to handbooks, manuals, reports and other printed materials.

Punctuation

- Use a single space after a period (AP, Gregg).
- Do not use commas before a conjunction in a simple series (AP).

Example: Accountability, responsiveness and transparency are the values that guide HHS when providing services to millions of Texans.

- A comma should be used before the terminal conjunction in a complex series, if part of that series also contains a conjunction (AP).

Example: *Through the program, clients can receive food, clothing, shelter, financial and emotional support, and first aid.*

References

- In stories, name sources within the text at the point of the citation (AP).

Example: *According to the National Institutes of Health, losing just five to 10 percent of body weight can produce health benefits.*

- Exception to AP and Gregg: For designed materials, place a footnote or endnote without a space after the period of the sentence containing the citation. The source should then be listed at the bottom of the page or the end of the document only with the name of the publishing entity.

Examples: *Texas Department of State Health Services, Centers for Disease Control*

- Exception to AP and Gregg: For all other documents, use American Psychological Association Style to fully format citations. In text, incorporate citations or use footnotes or endnotes.

Example: *Millen, B.E., Ohls, J., Ponza, M., & McCool, A.C. (2002). The elderly nutrition program: An effective national framework for preventive nutrition interventions. Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 102(2), 234-240.*

Telephone numbers

- Use figures and hyphens, not periods.

Example: 212-621-1500.

Example: 800-111-1000 for toll-free numbers.

- In the case of vanity phone numbers, present the digit-only version first.

Example: 877-847-8377 (877-THSTEPS)

- Exception to AP: Include the "1-" in phone numbers on Spanish materials.

► When English and Spanish text appear side-by-side, retain the 1- in the phone number in English as well.

Titles

- Capitalize a formal title if it is used immediately before a person's name (AP).

- Titles are lowercase if they follow the name or no name is present (AP).

Examples: *Executive Commissioner Charles Smith. Charles Smith, executive commissioner, spoke at the meeting. The commissioner met with stakeholders.*

- Abbreviate titles when used before a full name: Dr., Gov., Rep. and Sen. (AP).

URLs

- Do not include "http://" in URLs when the web address can be clearly understood (Gregg).
- Clarification on Gregg: When appropriate, omit "www." in URLs. Neither of the HHS website URLs (hhs.texas.gov, dshs.texas.gov) begin with www.

- In print materials, avoid using long URLs by giving a shorter URL and directions for getting to the webpage or document. Include the long URL as a footnote. For some webpages, you can request a shortlink from HHS.Communications@hhsc.state.tx.us

Plain Language Terms and Phrases

Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
access	use	
actively participate	be involved	
adolescent	teen or teenager	
alien	immigrant	
alternative	choice	
and/or	or, and, or both, and both	Not correct: Call us if you are enrolled in Medicare and/or Medicaid. Correct: Call us if you are enrolled in Medicare, Medicaid or both.
annual	once a year	
annually	yearly	
applicant	[should usually avoid]	Instead of “Medicaid applicant,” use “person who applied for Medicaid.”
appoint	name	
appointment	visit	
approximately	about	
assist	help	
attempt	try	
available	ready	
case	person, resident	
category	group	
cavity/cavities	tooth decay	
certified	are approved, will get	Not correct: You are certified for Medicaid on Oct. 1, 2009. Correct: You are approved for Medicaid starting Oct. 1, 2009.

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Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
check up OR check-up	checkup	Federal directive (Frew v. Hawkins): Use “checkup” or the Spanish “examen” when referring to a Medicaid medical or dental service provided through Texas Health Steps.
chronic illness	long-lasting illness	
communicate	talk	
competent	able	Can also use “has the skills to.”
completion	end, finish	
comply	meet the program rules	
consent	agree to	
contact us	call us (if only a phone number is listed) / email us (if only an email address is listed)	
continue	keep getting or keep going	
contraception	birth control	
decrease	reduce, lower	
demonstrate	show	
dependent	[avoid]	Not correct: Dependent care costs Correct: Costs for people who depend on you.
denied	not approved, will not get	Not correct: Your Medicaid case has been denied. Correct: You are not approved for Medicaid.

Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
detect	find	
determine	find out, see if, decide	
difficulties	problems, trouble	
discontinue	stop	
disenroll	leave the program	
disqualified	no longer meets the program rules, can no longer be in the program, not able to get	
drug, on first reference when referring to prescription medication	medicine, medicines, medication, prescription, prescription drugs	Drug is acceptable on second reference or if context is clear.
due to	because	
educated (v) or be informed	learn about	
effective date	start date, the date you can start getting services	
eligible	are able to get	“Eligible” and “eligibility” are both complex, multisyllabic words. Try to avoid using them by restructuring the sentence.
encourage	urge	
endeavor	try	
enroll	join	
exceeds	is more than	
exhausted (v)	gone through, used up	
facilitate	help, ease	
feasible	can be done	
for more information	To learn more: Questions? Call xxx-xxx-xxxx...	.

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Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
frequently	often	
fundamental	basic	
head of household	contact person	<p>If “head of household” needs to be used, provide a definition.</p> <p>Example: The head of household is the main caretaker of the people applying for services.</p> <p>See entry “household.”</p>
household	[should usually avoid]	<p>Not correct: “Household composition”</p> <p>Correct: “People living in your home” or “People on your benefits case.”</p> <p>See entry “head of household.”</p>
identical	same	
impair	harm	This refers to the use of “impair” as a transitive verb, not a pejorative.
indigent	people who are low-income	
individual, individuals	person, people, resident, person receiving services	<p>Use “person” unless there’s a need to distinguish the person you’re referring to from a multiple-person group.</p> <p>Individual is acceptable when part of a standardized phrase or acronym such as intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICF/IID).</p>
ineligible	not able to get	
inform	tell	
information	fact	See entry “for more information.”
initial	first	
initiate	begin, start	

Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
maintain your health	stay healthy	
make sure to...	[should usually avoid]	Not correct: "Make sure to apply for Medicaid." Correct: "Apply for Medicaid," or "Remember to apply for Medicaid."
may	can, might	"May" infers that permission is needed. "Can" lets people know their options. To say what could happen, use "might" instead. Not correct: You may file a complaint with the facility director. Correct: You can file a complaint with the facility director.
Medicaid ID form	Medicaid ID	
notification	notice	
notify	tell	
occur	happen	
opportunity	chance	
option	choice	
permission	agree to, allow	
persons	people	
person on Medicaid	person who has Medicaid	Not correct: Texas Health Steps checkups are free as long as your child is on Medicaid. Correct: Texas Health Steps checkups are free as long as your child has Medicaid.
pharmacy	drug store	
physician	doctor, clinic, primary care provider	See entry "PCP / medical home"
primary care dentist, dental home	main dentist	

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Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
PCP / medical home	primary care provider or main doctor	
private health insurance	other health insurance	
prior, prior to	before	
process (v)	to work on	
qualified	are able to get	
qualified alien	legal immigrant	
recertify	renew, re-apply	
re-enroll	renew, apply again	
relating to	about	
request	ask for	
required	need or needed	
resolve	fix	
resources (alone)	things you own	You might need to give examples of types of resources. Example: Report a change if your resources are more than \$10,000. This includes things like money you have in the bank, stocks, bonds, and cash.
select	pick	
several	many	
shots	vaccines, vaccinations	Exception: When writing about flu shots in English materials, the word “shot” is OK to use.
slashes	or, and	
stamped, self-addressed return envelope	pre-paid envelope	
suffer	–	Avoid when writing about an illness. “Suffer” can be insulting when talking about conditions like mental illness.

Avoid	Use	Notes and Examples
telephone	phone	
terminate	end	
third party insurance or third party liability	other insurance	
ultimate	last, final	
understand	know	
utilize	use	
vaccinations	vaccines	
verification	proof	
we are writing to tell you...	[should usually avoid]	
you are required to you are responsible for	you must	

HHS Preferred Medical, Social and Program Terms

Instead of	Use	Notes and Examples
211	2-1-1 Texas or 2-1-1	Do not refer to this number as “Information and Referral.” When needed, include the appropriate option to select. Example: Call 2-1-1 to report any changes to your case within 10 days. When you dial 2-1-1, pick a language and then press 2. Example: Dial 2-1-1 option 8 to find mental health services.
CPW	Case Management for Children and Pregnant Women	
certified	are approved, will get	Not correct: You are certified for Medicaid on Oct. 1, 2009. Correct: You are approved for Medicaid starting Oct. 1, 2009.
check up OR check-up	checkup	Federal directive (Frew v. Hawkins): Use “checkup” or the Spanish “examen” when referring to a Medicaid medical or dental service provided through Texas Health Steps.
Deafblind, DeafBlind, deaf-blind	deafblind	Use when deafness and blindness occur together. Capitalized only when part of an official name or heading, as per AP style.
drug use	substance use, use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs	Generally, people do not associate alcohol and tobacco with drug use.
EPSDT or Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment	Texas Health Steps	

Instead of	Use	Notes and Examples
fee-for-service Medicaid	traditional Medicaid	Only use “traditional Medicaid” when you need to distinguish it from other Medicaid plans like STAR, PCCM, STAR+PLUS, etc. Otherwise, just use the term “Medicaid.” If you use “traditional Medicaid,” add the following explanation: “You get traditional Medicaid if you don’t have PCCM, STAR, Star Health or STAR+PLUS.”
healthcare, health-care	health care	Two words, per AP. Hyphenate only as a modifier: “health-care program.”
ID/DD for intellectual and developmental disability	IDD	
Medicaid and CHIP health plans	medical plan or CHIP dental plan	Do not use the generic term “health plan.” Use specific name on first reference and “medical plan” or “dental plan” on second reference.
Medical Transportation Program or MTP	medical transportation services	Brand the services, not the program that administers the services.
mental/behavioral health, behavioral health and substance use	behavioral health (for provider and legislative materials), mental health and substance use (for public materials)	Behavioral health includes both mental health and substance use.
State Supported Living Center, Area Agency on Aging, State Hospital	State supported living center, area agency on aging, state hospital	Lowercase in general references. Only capitalize when referring to a specific location. Example: Abilene State Supported Living Center.
state of Texas, the state	Texas Health and Human Services on first reference, HHS on following reference	To avoid confusion with the federal Health and Human Services agency, do not use HHS by itself without first spelling out “Texas Health and Human Services.”

Instead of	Use	Notes and Examples
<p>substance abuse, alcohol abuse, substance dependence, addiction, addicts</p>	<p>substance use, substance misuse, substance use disorder, alcohol use disorder, opioid use disorder, person with a substance use disorder</p>	<p>Substance use is taking any substance, whether legally or illegally. Misuse describes potentially harmful use that alone may not constitute a diagnosable substance use disorder. A substance use disorder is a diagnosis by a professional that describes a recurrent pattern of using a substance that impairs daily life activities or causes noticeable distress (DSM-5).</p> <p>Mention the specific substance when possible (e.g., alcohol use, opioid use disorder). If necessary, the disorder can be described as mild, moderate or severe depending on the effect the use has on the person's life. There is no need to mention whether the substance is legal or illegal.</p>
<div> <p>Examples</p> <p>Substance Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using prescription medication as directed by a medical professional. A person 21 or older drinking alcohol responsibly or a person 18 or older using tobacco products <p>Substance Misuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking prescription medication in a manner other than prescribed by a medical professional (taking too many, too frequently, sharing medication with another person) Binge drinking, drinking and driving, dinking in excess of the legal limit Drinking alcohol before the legal age of 21 or using tobacco products before the legal age of 18 </div>		
<p>sun down, sun downing, sun-downing, sun-downing behavior</p>	<p>sundowning</p>	<p>A symptom of dementia defined by confusion and agitation in the late afternoon and evening. One word in all cases, no hyphen. Use as a noun, not a verb. "Show signs of sundowning" not "he is sundowning" or "she sundowned."</p>
<p>TDD</p>	<p>TTY</p>	<p>TTY is the preferred technology.</p>
<p>THSteps</p>	<p>Texas Health Steps</p>	<p>Texas Health Steps is the court-approved name for these Medicaid services for children.</p>
<p>TP or Type Program</p>	<p>the official name of the Medicaid program</p>	
<p>Texas Medicaid, the Medicaid Program</p>	<p>Medicaid</p>	<p>Use full program name only on first reference if necessary.</p>

Respectful, Person-First Language

While person-first language is a respectful way to describe a person and their abilities, defer to a person's self-identified language when quoting them. For example, some people with autism may describe themselves as autistic. People with hearing loss may identify as deaf or refer to deaf culture, which is only capitalized only in formal names or direct quotes of printed materials (AP).

Avoid	Use
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound	people who use wheelchairs, a person who uses a wheelchair
handicapped buses, bathrooms, etc.	accessible buses, bathrooms, etc.
handicapped parking	accessible parking, reserved parking for people with disabilities
indigent, impoverished, needy	people living in poverty, people who are food insecure
learning disabled, special needs (as an adjective)*	has a learning disability
mentally ill, mentally ill people, person with issues, mental health disorder	people with mental health conditions (if diagnosed), person with mental illness (if diagnosed), symptoms of a mental illness (if not diagnosed), behavioral health needs (if not diagnosed)
old people, old men or women, senior citizens, the elders	people who are older, older adults
substance abuse, alcohol abuse, substance dependence, addiction, addicts	person with a substance use disorder
the blind, the deaf	people who are blind, people with visual impairments, people who are deaf, people with hearing impairments, person who is hard of hearing

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Avoid	Use
the disabled, handicapped, crippled, paraplegic, diabetic, epileptic	people with disabilities, a person with a disability, person with paraplegia, person with diabetes, person with epilepsy
the intellectually disabled, mentally challenged, mentally retarded, people with mental retardation†	people with intellectual disabilities (ID), people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)

**The term “special needs” is a euphemism that can have negative connotations. However, it can respectfully describe accessibility needs or accommodations for children with disabilities, particularly in regard to receiving services or education (for example: Children with Special Health Care Needs Services). Use “child with special needs” and not “special needs child.” “She has special needs,” not “she is special needs.”*

†Several local mental health authorities in Texas still use the abbreviation MHMR (formerly Mental Health Mental Retardation). Do not spell out the abbreviation unless necessary for legal documentation or unless it is accompanied by an explanation of the term’s historical usage.



Brand Management

For more information on branding and campaigns, contact your agency's communications office:

- HHSC Communications:
HHSC.Communications@hhsc.state.tx.us
- DSHS Communications:
DSHS.Communications@dshs.texas.gov

Contractors and vendors should work with the agency contract manager or program area to contact the agency's communications office for questions or guidance on applying the brand.

HHS staff can download branded templates, including stationery and PowerPoint templates, at <https://hhsconnection.hhs.texas.gov/communication-services/templates>



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